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Senate

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer.

Let us pray.

Almighty God, thank You for Your steadfast love and unchanging mercy, for we are sustained by Your tender compassion.

Give our lawmakers the wisdom to follow Your example of self-sacrifice and keep them from traveling down dead-end paths. Lord, strengthen them in their challenging work, as they strive to find common ground. Shield them from strife, as they seek to unite for the good of our Nation and world. Empower them to trust You, even during life's storms, believing that in everything You are working for the good of those who love You. Lord, do for them exceedingly, abundantly above all that they can ask or think.

We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). The Democratic leader is recognized.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it seems as if every day the majority leader keeps telling us how great the Senate is working—better than ever, he says. Let's take a look at a couple of things today.

The growing backlog on nominations is another story. There are more than 100 nominations pending in committees. This is an interesting way the Republicans do this. They say we do not have anything on the calendar. We cannot have anything on the calendar if they do not report them out of the committees.

There are 48 nominations currently pending in the Foreign Relations Committee, including Ambassadors of really important countries, such as Pakistan, Finland, Sweden, Kosovo, and many other countries. The Environment and Public Works Committee has 11 pending nominations, and 9 nominations are waiting in the HELP Committee. At the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, there is a score—many of them there. There are eight nominations awaiting consideration in the banking committee. Seven are pending in commerce, and six await Senate Finance Committee action.

In the Judiciary Committee—I spoke here a little while ago, a week ago, about Judge Felipe Restrepo. He is a Federal district court judge in Pennsylvania. It is being delayed, even though both Senators—a Democrat and Republican—from Pennsylvania want this nomination to go forward. So they say. He is one of 20 pending nominations awaiting in the Judiciary Committee. That is unbelievable. Committee consideration is not the only obstacle to confirmation, the Republican leader also slows down the consideration once they get here on the floor.

The Republicans' refusal to consider the President's judicial nominations is especially pronounced, especially when you consider that the assistant Republican leader came to the floor here and said we are going to move these expeditiously. He is from Texas. We had one judge, George Hanks, who was confirmed by a vote of 91 to 0. He was only the second judicial nomination we have

considered in this Republican Congress in some 5 months.

Imagine that. We know there are judicial emergencies and vacancies throughout the country, but we have only considered two judges in this entire Congress.

When this year started, we had 12 emergencies. Now there are 25, more than double from the beginning of this year alone. In Texas alone, there are seven judicial emergencies, the most of any State in the Nation.

Judge Olvera has been nominated to fill a judicial emergency in the Southern District of Texas. His nomination certainly was not controversial. It was reported out of the Judiciary Committee by voice vote in February.

At his hearing, as I indicated earlier, the assistant majority leader said he wanted to move these judges expeditiously. If this is expeditiously, I do not know what the term means. Why is this noncontroversial nomination being delayed for months? Is this the type of swift type of confirmation that Texans can expect from their leaders?

If our Republican colleagues would make good on their public statements and confirm these qualified executive and judicial nominations before the Memorial Day holiday, that would be great. But they are not going to. Is the Senate working better than ever? I do not think so.

HIGHWAY BILL

Mr. REID. "America is one big pothole." Those are not my words. They are the words of former Republican Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood, a longtime Member of Congress and a Republican from Illinois. That is how he described America's crumbling infrastructure: "America is one big pothole."

It is hard to argue with Secretary LaHood's assessment. According to the Federal Highway Administration, 50 percent of American roads are in disrepair. Half of the roads we drive on

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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